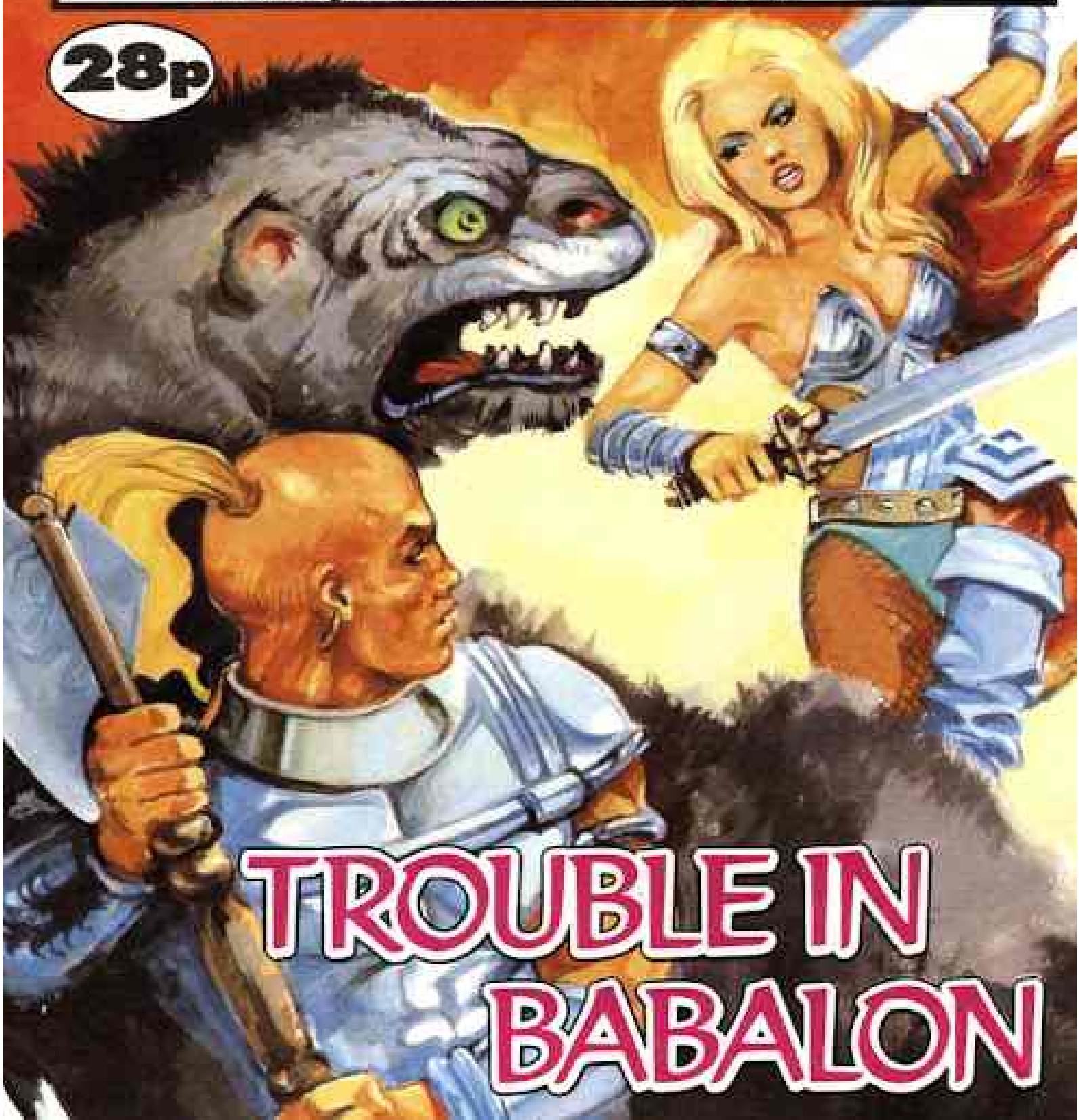
STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 216

28p

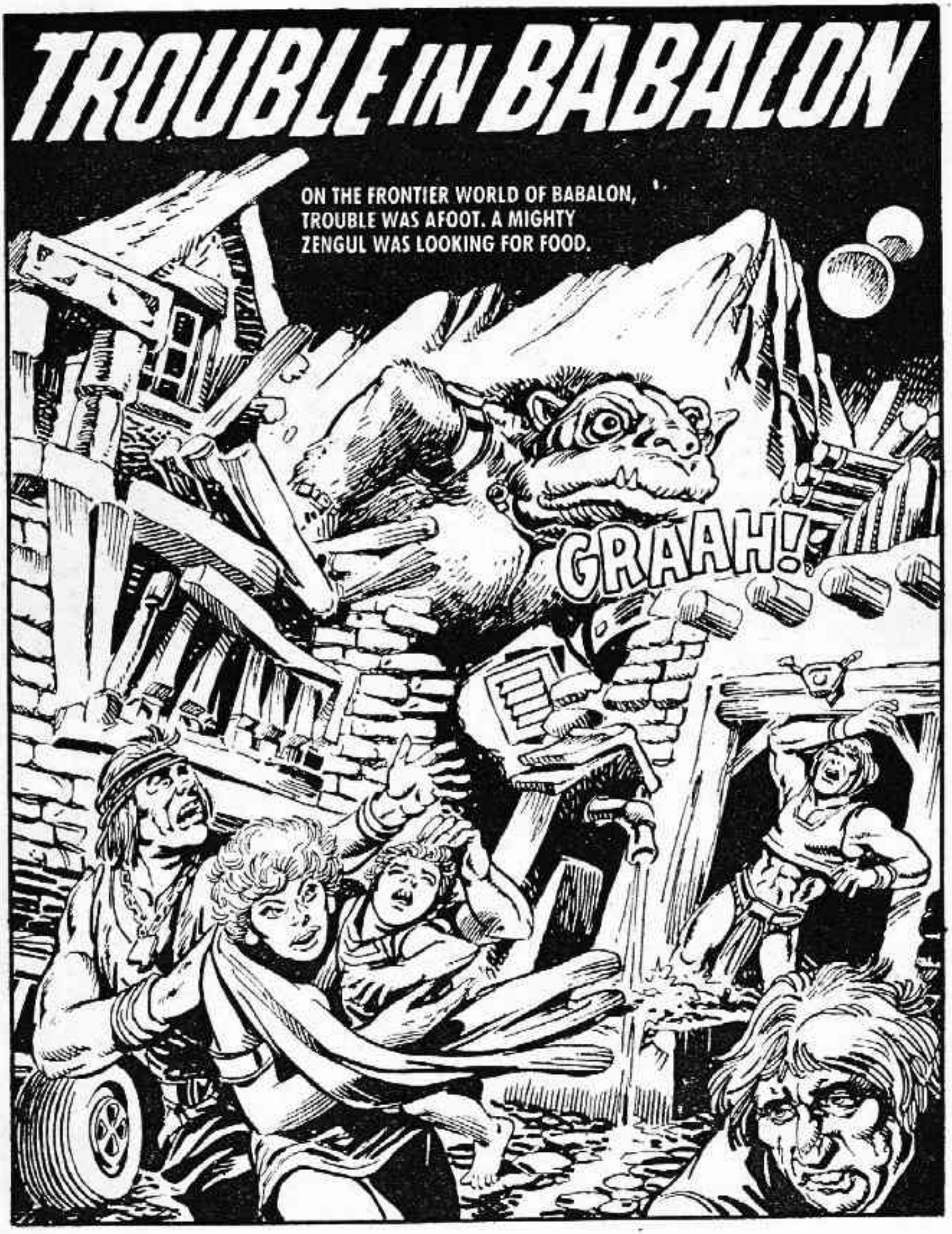


TROUBLE IN BABALON

DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S *OTHER*

On sale at your newsagent's *NOW!*

TROUBLE IN BABALON



CINNIBAR AND RULF, OF THE BABALON WARRIOR CLASS, WERE DULY EMPLOYED.

RULF — I AM NOT A LITTLE GIRL. I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF.
MMM! 'TIS MY DUTY TO PROTECT SHE-KIN.

BEWARE! ROCKSLIDE!
RUMBLE!

THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT! LOOK UP YONDER!

AAA...OOO

I ALLOW NO STUPID MONSTER TO SNIGGER AT ME.
OH, NO — HERE COMES TROUBLE!

HIYAH!

I HAVE YOU, FOUL CREATURE.

HE BREAKS OUR LINES. WHAT NOW, SISTER?
MUST I DO ALL YOUR THINKING? CANNOT YOU EVER USE YOUR HEAD?
AH YES — MY HEAD! GOOD IDEA.
AT TIMES I WORRY ABOUT THAT BOY.
AAAHHH!
DONK

GRRR — NO . . . PLEASE NOT HURT ME.
IT SPEAKS!
A LIMITED VOCAL ABILITY. THERE WAS AN ELEMENT OF HUMAN IN THE GENETIC EXPERIMENT OF HIS CONSTRUCTION.

I OWN IT — AS I NOW OWN YOU, MA'AM.
NOBODY OWNS CINNIBAR.

WHAT IS THIS?
IT IS A LASER HARNESS. YOU ARE NOW THE PROPERTY OF BO KRETCH.

TREACHEROUS HUME! I'LL FEED YOU TO MY HOUND PACK.
GAG HER, KARP. SUCH VILENESS FROM SUCH A PRETTY MOUTH!

NOW WHAT PUNISHMENT IS MERITED BY A FOOLISH ZENGUL WHO MANAGES TO DAMAGE A VALUABLE ITEM.
MASTER — NO . . . PLEASE NO.

NO . . . NOT THE COLLAR — AAAH —
A SMALL JOLT TO INDUCE OBEDIENCE.
MASTER, WHAT OF THE FALLEN ONE?
THERE IS NO PROFIT IN BROKEN BONES.
BUT RULF HAD A HARD HEAD—
WHAT HIT ME?

MONSTER AND SISTER GONE! AH — AIRSLED. I SEE HER.
SHE BOUND — A PRISONER. SISTER, I COME. RULF WILL SAVE YOU.

THE AIRSLED FLEW ON . . .
THE COLLAR WITH WHICH YOU ARE BEING ADORNED IS MY MARK OF OWNERSHIP . . . AND IT HAS OTHER USES.
AND IT IS NEEDED!
DINK!
EURGH!
AN OBJECT LESSON IN OBEDIENCE.
AAAAH

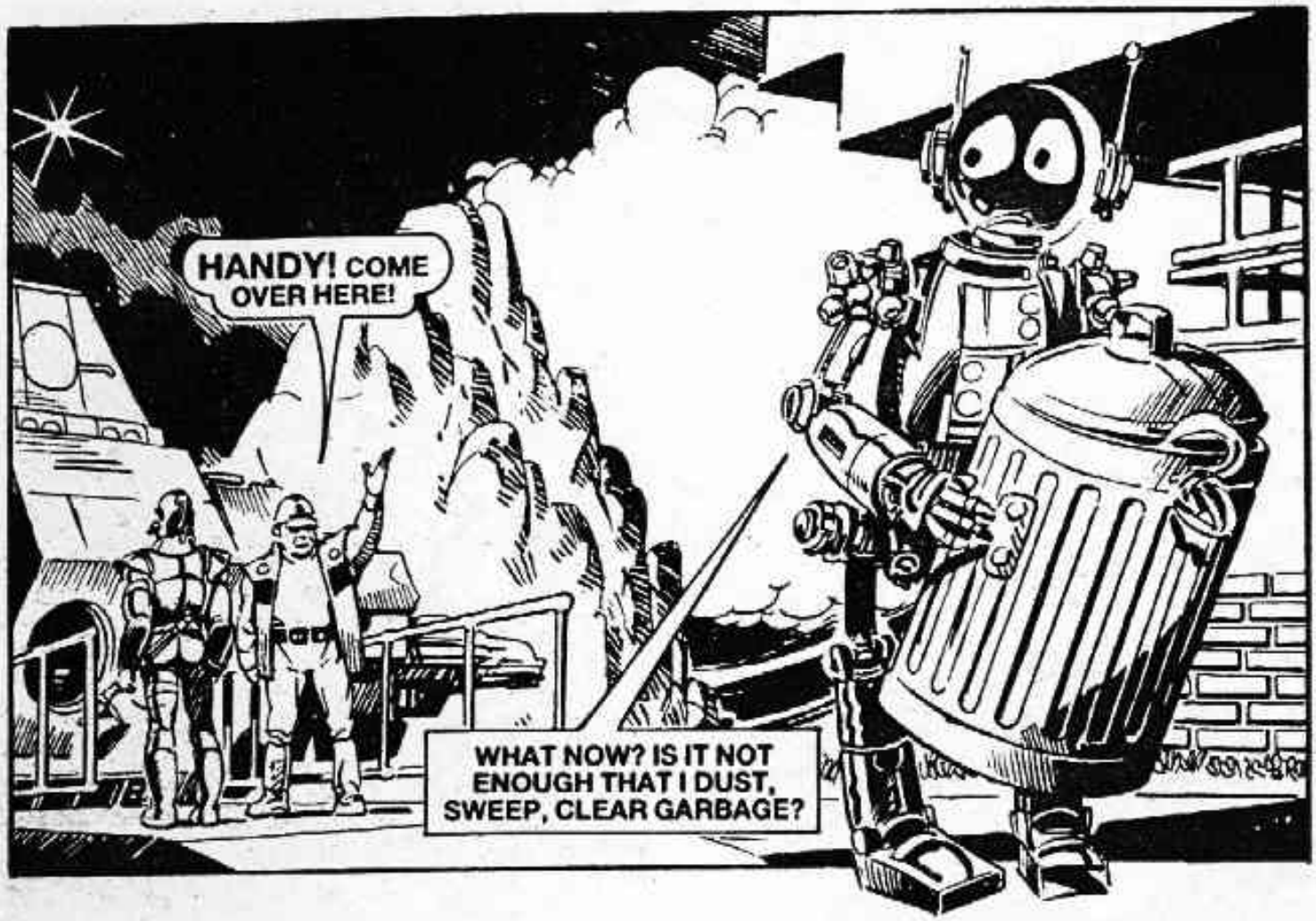
GRRR . . . HURT BAD . . . BEST YOU DO AS TOLD.
I BELIEVE THERE IS KINDNESS IN THE BEAST.
ARRY'S PLACE, MASTER.
I'LL SETTLE THE BILL WHILE YOU LOAD MY NEW ITEM OF MERCHANDISE ONTO THE SHUTTLE.
LATER —
KRETCH'S SHUTTLE HAS JUST TAKEN OFF, ARRY!
I'M ALWAYS GLAD TO SEE THE BACK OF THAT SLAVE MERCHANT.

THEN —
WHERE GO THAT FLYING MACHINE? YOU TELL ME — QUICK.
A ROWDY NATIVE! TOSS HIM OUT, BOYS.

WE DON'T SERVE NATIVES HERE!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT — I NOT WANT NATIVE, JUST INFORMATION.

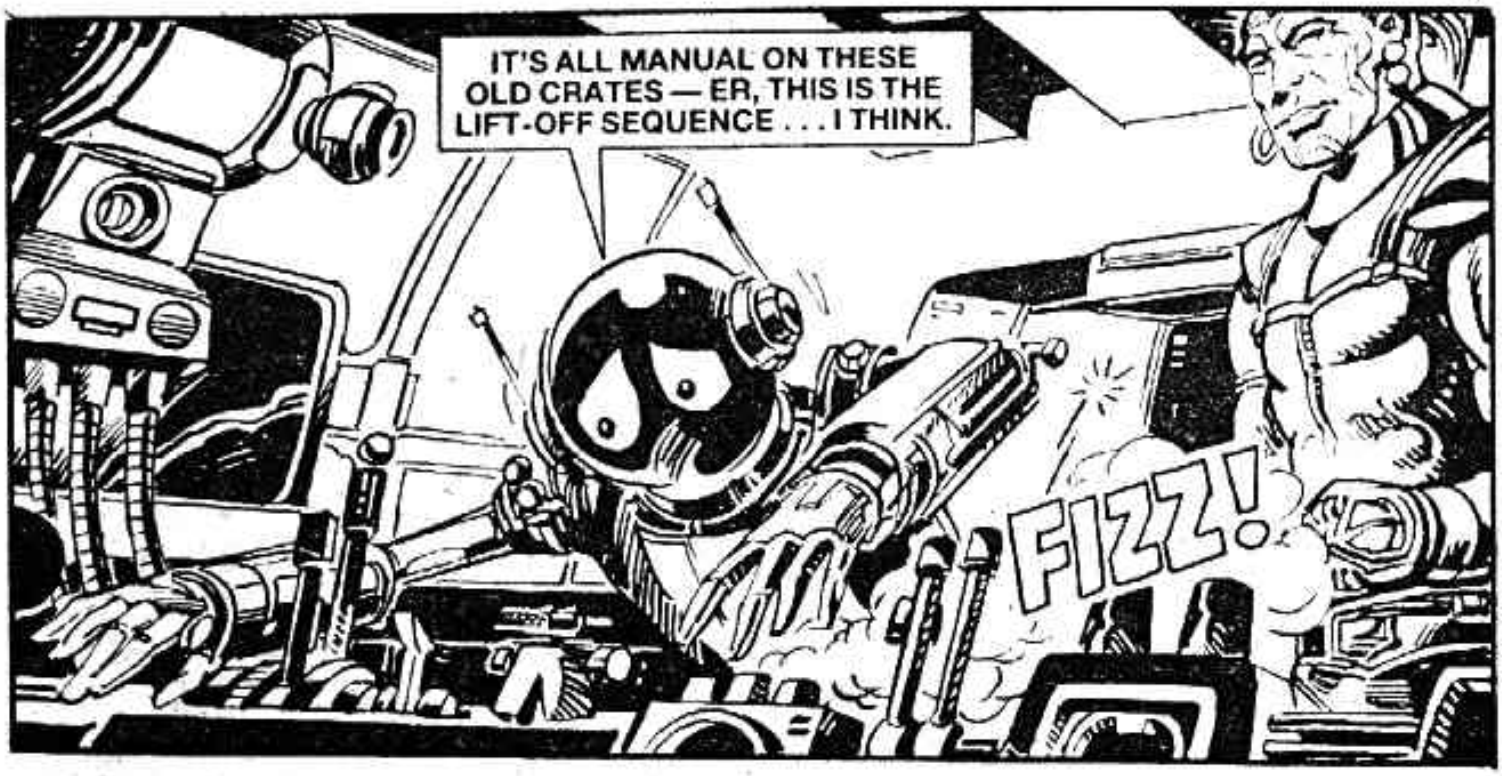
ARRY'S PLACE BECAME NOISY, AS THE CRED FINALLY DROPPED IN RULF'S SLOW BRAIN.
ARGH! — YEEEKS!
ARRY'S PLACE
FINALLY, ARRY DECIDED TO ANSWER THE QUESTION . . .
EASY, SIR — THAT WAS THE SHUTTLE OF BO KRETCH, THE SLAVE MERCHANT. HE'S GOT A HOLDING PEN SOMEWHERE AMONG THE ASTEROIDS.
I PAY FOR HELP TO GET AFTER HIM. GOT WHITE METAL AND STONES THAT PLEASE YOU HUMES.

SILVER AND DIAMONDS . . . PURE AS WELL . . .
HUM — ER, NOT MUCH CALL FOR THIS NATIVE STUFF THESE DAYS, BUT I'LL TAKE A CHANCE. IT SO HAPPENS I'VE GOT A NICE LITTLE BUS — ONE CAREFUL OWNER, UNDER FIFTY MILLION ON THE CLOCK.
I KNOW NOTHING OF SUCH TRANSPORT. NEED PILOT.
SIR, THIS IS DEFINITELY YOUR LUCKY DAY.
HEY, HANDY!


HANDY! COME OVER HERE!
WHAT NOW? IS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT I DUST, SWEEP, CLEAR GARBAGE?

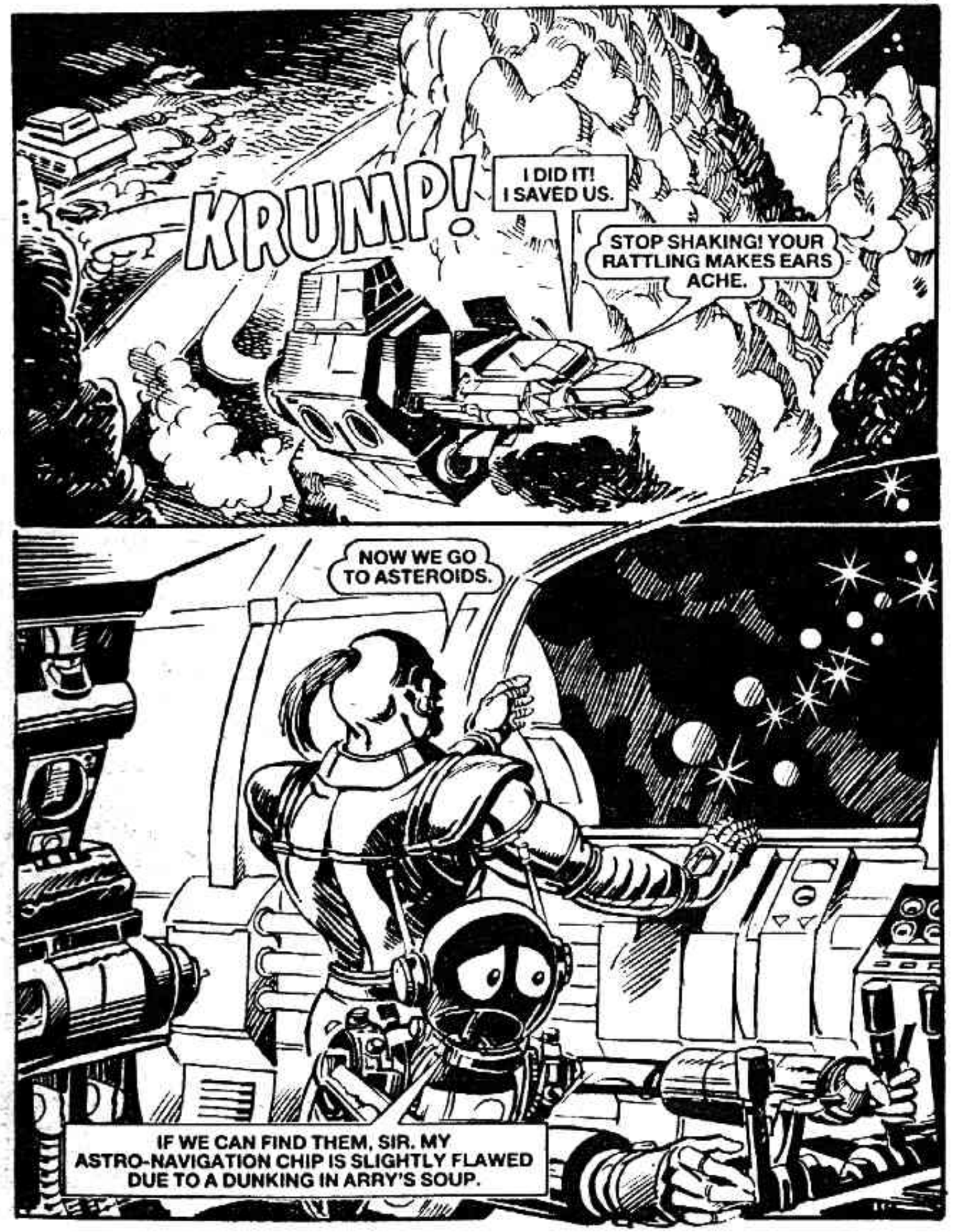
AN ASTROTECH, ONE OF THE FIRST MODELS WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. IT BREAKS MY HEART TO PART WITH HIM, BUT I'VE TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU, SIR.

RULF AND ARRY STRUCK A DEAL . . .
YOU FLY ME TO ASTEROIDS. WE FIND BO KRETCH.
WHAT — ER, OH DEAR! ACTUALLY I AM REALLY QUITE CONTENT WITH MY POST HERE.
YOU FLY ME — OR LOSE HEAD.
HUM-ER, WE FLY . . . IF THAT PART OF MY PROGRAMMING HAS NOT BEEN ERASED.
HANDY PROGRAMMED THE IGNITION SEQUENCE.
TAKE COVER! HEAD FOR THE CELLAR.
BLAZING CORONA— IT HAS STARTED.



RULF'S NEW PROPERTY TOOK OFF . . .

WHY YOU HOLD YOUR HEAD BETWEEN KNEES?
I HAVE THIS INTENSE DISLIKE OF FLYING.
DOES THIS MACHINE FLY THROUGH MOUNTAINS?
OH, DEAR — ER . . .


KRUMP!
I DID IT! I SAVED US.
STOP SHAKING! YOUR RATTLING MAKES EARS ACHE.
NOW WE GO TO ASTEROIDS.
IF WE CAN FIND THEM, SIR. MY ASTRO-NAVIGATION CHIP IS SLIGHTLY FLAWED DUE TO A DUNKING IN ARRY'S SOUP.

ON BOARD BO KRETCH'S STARSHIP . . .
ASTROTECH TO COMMANDER. ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY ABOUT TO BE AFFECTED BY TURNING MANOEVRE.
IN THE CARGO HOLD . . .
SOON WE IN HOLDING PEN. THEN MASTER BO SORT OUT VALUES OF YOU BITS OF MERCHANDISE. HEHEHE!

BEGONE FOUL TROLLS. YOU POISON EVEN THIS TAINTED SHIP-AIR.
HEHEHE! SHE CREATURE, YOU SOON LEARN GOOD MANNERS.
HEHEHE! YOU LEARN.
FZZT!

AS THE CRAFT SWUNG ROUND CINNIBAR TOOK HER CHANCE —
THIS TIGHT TURN.
THE SHE — ARGH!
MASTER, TROUBLE IN THE HOLD. THE SHE ATTACKS CARGO-HANDLER.
ANNOYING FEMALE. LET ME SEE . . . HER RESTRAINER BEAM IS NUMBER TEN.

CINNIBAR WAS RESTRAINED . . .
FIZZT!
AARGH

HIM DEAD! I KILL SHE — KILL.
MUST NOT . . . GRRRR . . . MASTER ANGRY AT DAMAGE TO GOODS.

MASTER ALWAYS WIN . . . GRRRR . . . NO GOOD TO FIGHT.
ZENGUL, I WILL ONLY CEASE TO FIGHT WHEN I AM DEAD.

THE STARSHIP DOCKED . . .
RIG PASSAGE TUBE TO AIRLOCK PORTAL . . . COMMENCE OFF-LOADING CARGO.
YOU HURRY . . . HURRY!
THIS IS MANGO, MY RINGMASTER, WHO WILL ASSESS YOUR VALUE. I WARN NOW THAT I DEAL ONLY IN GOOD QUALITY MERCHANDISE. THOSE OF YOU FOUND INFERIOR WILL BE DISCARDED INTO THE FUSION CHAMBER OF MY SHIP.

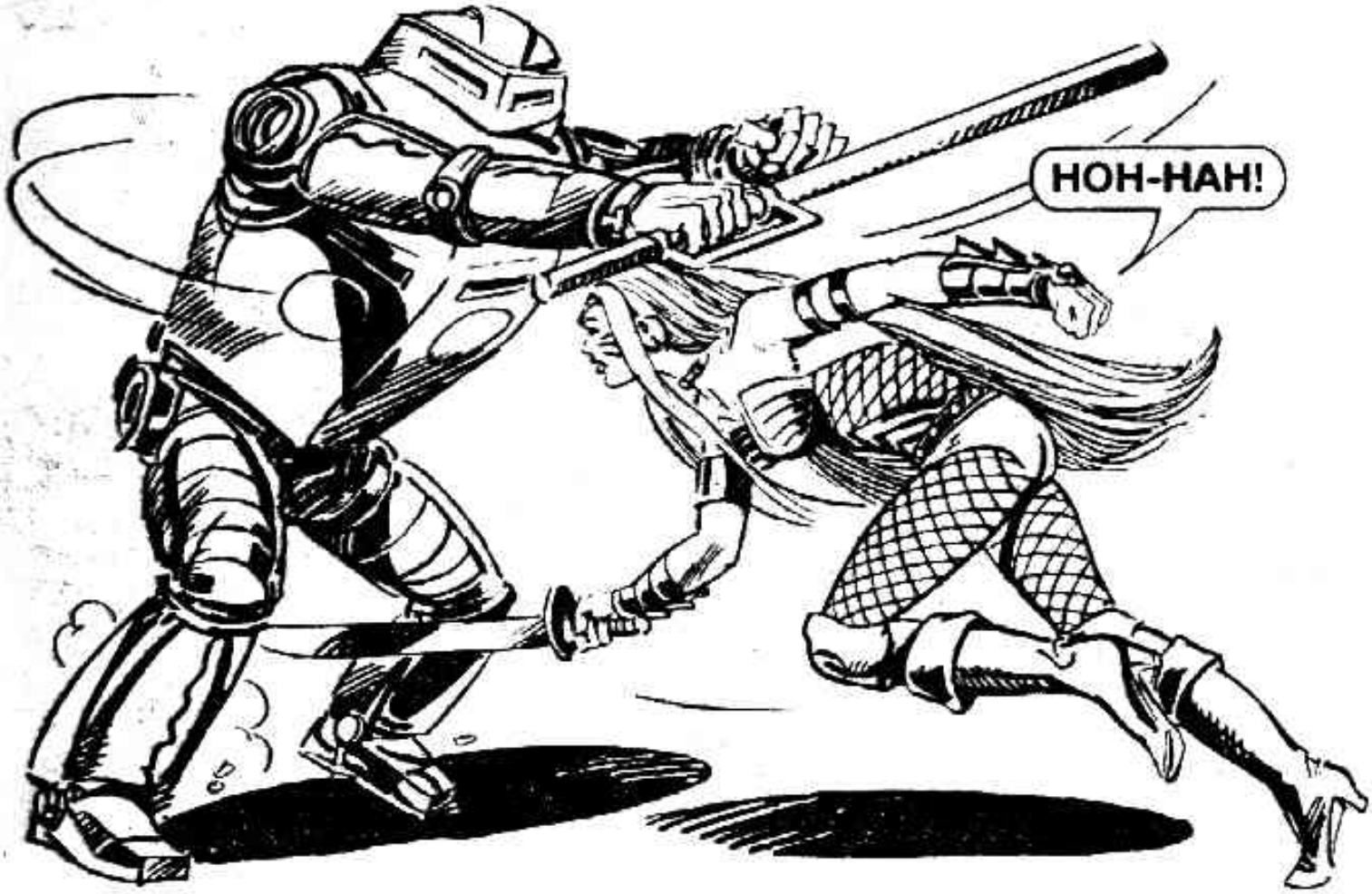
RULF WAS MAKING PROGRESS—
ANOTHER STOP! YOU WANT TO LOSE HEAD?
SIR, NO . . . PLEASE. A HEADLESS ASTROTECH IS QUITE USELESS.
I DO MY BEST, BUT THIS CLAPPED-OUT OLD CHEMICAL IMPLOSION MOTOR NEEDS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE HANDLING.
AAAAH . . . MACHINES NEED EXPERT CARE.

LIKE THIS . . . ?
BOOT
OH, NO!
GOOD — WE MOVE. MAYBE I HELP WITH ONE MORE SENSITIVE KICK.
FLUP!
OH, NO, SIR— NO . . . PLEASE.

FAR AWAY, RINGMASTER MANGO WENT TO WORK . . .
STRIKE FASTER, HARDER. THESE TRAINING ROBOTS ARE PROGRAMMED NOT TO DAMAGE MERCHANDISE.

CINNIBAR PLAYS NO GAME WITH MECHMEN.
AH, YES — THE AWKWARD SHE! SO YOU PREFER MORE SERIOUS COMBAT, EH?
EASY TO FIX. NO MORE PLAY.

NOW! TRAINER WILL KILL.
THANK YOU! THIS IS MUCH MORE PLEASANT.


HOH-HAH!

DESTRUCTIVE SHE! RESTRAINT IS REQUIRED.
DONG

NO, MANGO. LEAVE HER TO ME.

MY DEAR, LIFE COULD BE SO REWARDING IF ONLY YOU WOULD ADJUST. YOUR MARTIAL SKILLS COULD MAKE YOU A TOP GLADIATOR EARNING RICH PICKINGS AT PRIVATE FUNCTIONS. AT LEAST THINK ABOUT IT.
I THINK ABOUT IT!

CLANG
I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT IT — THIS IS MY ANSWER.

DEFINITE NEED FOR RESTRAINT.
AAAH!
MASTER, GOOD THING YOU WERE WEARING YOUR ENERGY SHIELD! I THINK WE PUT THIS SHE IN FUSION CHAMBER — YES?
NO! THERE MUST BE A PROFIT IN SUCH SKILLED FURY.

NOT TOO FAR AWAY, RULF CAME IN AMONG THE ASTEROIDS . . .
GAZETTEER SHOWS NEAREST PLACE OF HABITATION AS CLOOTVILLE — SMALL STOPOVER RESORT.
GOOD! MAYBE THERE IS SOMEBODY WHO CAN TELL ME HOW TO FIND LAIR OF BO KRETCH.
I, RULF OF THE AXE, WILL HONOUR YOU WITH A VISIT.
MISTER RULF, YOU ARE MOST WELCOME. COME RIGHT ON IN.
THAT LOOKS LIKE ROUGH CUSTOMER, MISTER MAYOR.
CONSTABLE, DON'T BE FOOLED BY LOOKS. PLENTY OF THESE RAGTAG PROSPECTORS ARE MULTI-MILLIONAIRES.

GREAT APOGEE! THAT SHIP'S ON FIRE.
MECHMAN, YOU HAVE GOT US SAFELY DOWN. NOW YOU MAY OPEN YOUR EYES.
CLOOTVILLE WELCOMES YOU. FINE NUTRITION, CLEANSING AND OILING ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.
THIS SOUNDS LIKE REAL HOSPITALITY.

RULF WAS ENTERTAINED . . .
GOOD SIR, IS THERE ANY OTHER SMALL MATTER IN WHICH I CAN OBLIGE YOU?
NO — ER, YES . . . MY MECHMAN COULD DO WITH AN OIL AND A DE-RUST.

MY MASTER IS NO PROSPECTOR — NO MERE ARTISAN. THE ONLY RICH STRIKES HE MAKES ARE WITH HIS AXE.
WASSAT?

THE ENTERTAINING CEASED . . .
CONSTABLE, TOSS THIS SPACE-HOBO INTO THE COOLER WHILE I DECIDE HOW TO GET BACK THE COST OF THIS WASTED FODDER.
PERHAPS A FEW WEEKS ON PUBLIC WORKS, MISTER MAYOR. THE ROBOT MIGHT BREAK DOWN FOR A FEW CREDITS IN SCRAP.
WHAT? IS THIS HOW YOU TREAT GUESTS ON THIS LUMP OF ROCK?

GRAB THAT FREAK.
FUN-TIME, EH! COME ON, GUYS.
NOTE TO DATABASE — FLIGHT IS TERRIFYING, YET BETTER THAN BEING BROKEN FOR SCRAP. I MUST ASSIST.
TURNING OFF ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY MAY CAUSE CONFUSION.

WITH NO GRAVITY, EVERYBODY BECAME WEIGHTLESS—
EH . . . WHAT?

YOUR SPACE-HELMET AND SUIT. I SUGGEST THIS IS TIME TO DEPART.
NOT BEFORE I GET THE ANSWER TO MY QUESTION.

WHERE IS BO KRETCH?
THE SLAVER! HE'S GOT A HOLDING PEN IN THE PHOEBUS SECTOR OF THE BELT.
SO SORRY I MUST LEAVE. LOVELY PARTY.

GRAVITY WAS RESTORED . . .

WE CAN STILL GET HIM.

CONSTABLE, WE'LL NOT DO HIM THE KINDNESS. BO KRETCH WILL DO A MUCH MESSIER JOB ON THE CRETIN.

ANDY WAS HAVING STEERING PROBLEMS.

LOOK OUT!

CRUMP!

FAR AWAY, A LUXURIOUS SPACE-YACHT BROUGHT A VALUED CLIENT TO BO KRETCH . . .
JUST A SMALL FAMILY PARTY, KRETCH . . . A FEW GOOD TURNS WITH LOTS OF ACTION AND BLOODLETTING.
NO PROBLEM, LORD HABAKUK. I CAN EVEN OFFER AN UNUSUAL NOVELTY ACT — A SHE GLADIATOR.

UNUSUAL, BUT THE PARTY IS FOR A CLONE POD OF SIXTEEN SONS COMING OF AGE. THE BOYS LIKE A LITTLE BLOOD.
MY LORD, FOR A VALUED CUSTOMER SUCH AS YOURSELF I AM PREPARED TO SACRIFICE FROM MY WILD BEAST STABLE. AN AGED CREATURE, BUT STILL CAPABLE OF A FIGHT . . . A RAGCAT FROM THE FEMALE'S OWN PLANET OF BABALON . . .

SO CINNIBAR AND HER OPPONENT WERE INTRODUCED—
THIS LOOKS GOOD . . . BUT WHAT IF THE FEMALE IS DAMAGED?
MY ROBOMEDS ARE CAPABLE OF MOST MAJOR REPAIR INCLUDING THE TRANSPLANTING OF LIMBS.

HEIGH-HO, PUSSY-CAT.
I LIKE IT! I LIKE IT . . . YET WHY DOES NOT THE FEMALE STRIKE WITH THE BLADE?
HUM — ER, IT MAY BE SHE INTENDS TO STRANGLE THE BEAST.

NICE TO HAVE YOUR EAR TICKLED, EH, PUSS. SO YOU ALSO WEAR A COLLAR.
SHE TAMES THE WILD RAGCAT.
THE GLADIATORS CHEERING WAS ABRUPTLY ENDED—
SILENCE, UNLESS YOU WANT PUNISHED!

ARGH . . . THE POOR BEAST IS RESTRAINED.
GRAHH

NOW ME . . . URHHHHHH!

FUSION CHAMBER?
YES, MANGO, MY PATIENCE IS AT LAST EXHAUSTED. PUT HER DOWN IN THE UNIT WHICH POWERS THIS PEN.

LORD HABAKUK — WAIT. I HAVE OTHER MERCHANDISE OF SPLENDID QUALITY.
VERY WELL . . . BUT IT BETTER BE GOOD OR I TAKE MY CUSTOM ELSEWHERE.

THE ARENA WAS CLEARED . . .
ZENGUL, COLLECT THE SHE.
THE SHE . . . GRRR.
LEAVE ME THE SWORD . . . LEAVE . . . AHHH!
YOU STRONG . . . ALWAYS FIGHT . . . GRRR. ZENGUL LEAVE YOUR SWORD.

STILL WITH HER SWORD, EH! NO MATTER . . . SHE WILL BE HELPLESS FOR LONG ENOUGH AFTER THAT LAST DOUBLE NERVE-JOLT I DEALT HER.
PUSS, HEED ME! WE MUST STRUGGLE AGAINST THIS NUMBNESS . . . STRIVE TO REGAIN OUR STRENGTH . . . I NEED YOUR HELP!

A RUCTION, MY LORD — A FREE-FOR-ALL AMONG SIX SKILLED PERSONS.
AH, GOOD! THIS IS THE ENTERTAINMENT FOR MY PARTY.
THE FIGHT BEGAN—

LITTLE RULF WAS HAVING PROBLEMS . . .
BANG!
ARGH! ARE YOU SURE THIS THE WAY?
THE SPACE GAZETTEER SAYS SO. THE DIFFICULTY IS IN NEGOTIATING SUCH A SHARP TURN WITH OUR ERRATIC RETROS.
WHY YOU SHAKE AND CLATTER ON FLOOR? GET UP.
SIR, I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF A PERSONALITY CRISIS *CLICK*— *GURK* KNOWN AS ACUTE PANIC.

PSHAH! RULF TAKES OVER. I WATCH YOU. SEEMS EASY.
GURLICK . . . PANIC INCREASES.
NOT BAD . . . BUT NOT QUITE. I TRY AGAIN.
CLANK
GURLICKICK . . .

WHILE AT THE PORTAL TO THE HOLDING PEN'S FUSION UNIT . . .
A LITTLE CLOSER . . . START THE TIPPER.
NOW, PUSSYKINS. STIR YOURSELF UNLESS YOU WISH TO BECOME A HAIRY RISSOLE.
THE SHE IS STILL SET ON BEING TROUBLESOME. ANOTHER JOLT OF RESTRAINT SHOULD FIX THAT.

NO . . . GRRR . . . NO . . .
IMPUDENT ZENGUL! SO YOU WANT A DOSE TOO, EH?
GRRRRR!
ZENGUL . . . AND NEXT IT WILL BE ME . . .

NOT THIS TIME.
URGHHHHH!
GO, PUSS! KILL!
NOT TERMINATE ME, NOBLE SHE . . . I BEG.
SHOW ME HOW TO BE RID OF THIS COLLAR AND I SHALL SHOW MERCY.

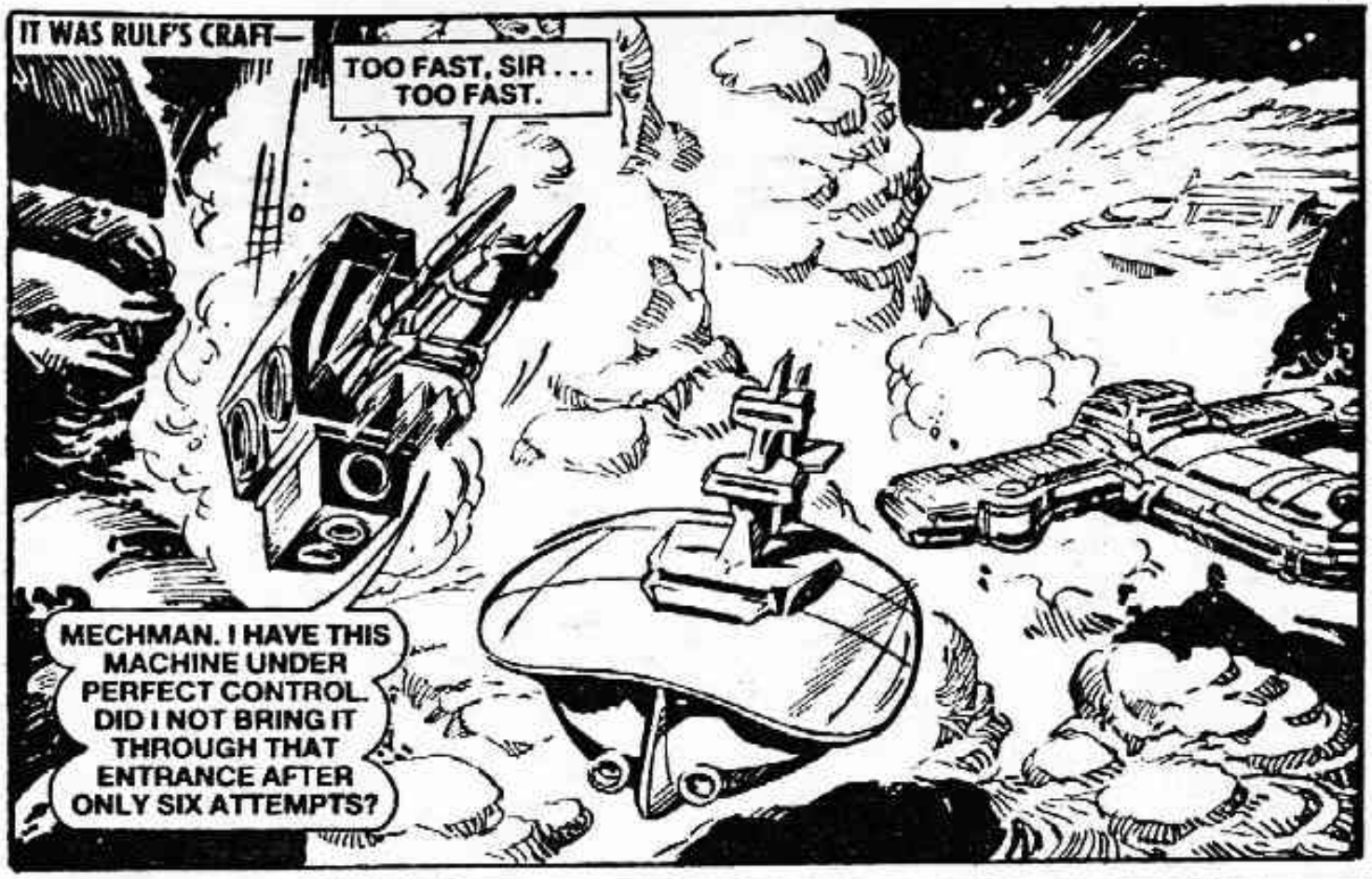
IS SIMPLE! LEVER ON BACK OF RESTRAINT UNIT CHANGES MAGNETIC FIELD WHICH HOLDS SHUT COLLAR.
SMALL BIPED, YOU WILL BECOME A HEAD SHORTER SHOULD ANYTHING ELSE HAPPEN.
MOMENTS LATER . . .
I AM FREE . . .

BO KRETCH WAS DISTURBED PLYING HIS TRADE . . .
MASTER, THE SHE CREATURE IS RAMPAGING THROUGH THE PEN. SHE FREES OTHER MERCHANDISE FROM RESTRAINT AND LEADS THEM IN REVOLT.
HAIL TO CINNIBAR!
HAIL!
COME . . . WE STRIKE BACK!

MERELY A TEMPORARY BUSINESS PROBLEM, LORD HABAKUK. I SUGGEST WE USE MY PRIVATE AIRCHUTE TO THE DOCK.

WE'LL WORK THE SHIP OUT INTO THE CRATER AND USE THE THREAT OF THE MESOM BLASTER TO BRING THOSE REVOLTING TRADE GOODS BACK INTO LINE.
HEH! HEH! THAT WILL SOON PERSUADE THEM, MASTER.

CAST OFF!
TAKE US OUT AND SWING THE SHIP ROUND SO THAT THE ARMAMENT COVERS THE DOCK.
MASTER, THERE IS AN OBSTRUCTION. A VESSEL ENTERS THE CRATER . . . A SHUTTLE OF ANCIENT STYLE AND DECREPIT CONDITION.


IT WAS RULF'S CRAFT—
TOO FAST, SIR . . . TOO FAST.
MECHMAN. I HAVE THIS MACHINE UNDER PERFECT CONTROL. DID I NOT BRING IT THROUGH THAT ENTRANCE AFTER ONLY SIX ATTEMPTS?

NOT BAD, EH! PERHAPS A LITTLE BUMPY.
KRUMPI!

MASTER, WE ARE ABOUT TO COLLIDE WITH PLANETARY STRATA. LOGICAL DEDUCTION WOULD INDICATE YOUR TERMINATION AS ORGANIC BEING.
NO! NO! ARHHHHHH!
BOOM!

LATER . . .

LADY CINNIBAR, BEING NATURAL HEIRS TO THE ESTATE OF THE LATE BO KRETCH, WE DECIDED TO KEEP THE BUSINESS GOING AS A FREELANCE BAND OF GLADIATORS. YOU WOULD HONOUR US BY BECOMING OUR CHAIRPERSON.
NAY, I YEARN FOR THE FORESTS AND PLAINS OF MY OWN PLANET — TO WHICH THE LORD HABAKUK HAS KINDLY OFFERED ME CONVEYANCE.

OH — ER, MY PLEASURE, NOBLE WARRIORESS. ANYWHERE YOU WISH.
TO BABALON THEN . . . AND A LANDING IN A QUIET PLACE OF MY CHOOSING.

CINNIBAR AND LITTLE RULF CAME HOME . . .
WHY MUST WE LAND IN THIS QUIET PLACE?
USE YOUR HEAD, LITTLE BROTHER. WOULD SPACEPORT CUSTOMS ALLOW THROUGH THAT WHICH WE HAVE WITH US?

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_____

TROUBLE IN BABALON

It started off as a simple tracking job for Cinnibar and Rulf. But, as with most things involving Rulf, nothing was straightforward. First of all he lost Cinnibar, then he acquired Handy the Petrified Android –and a lot of very dangerous enemies.

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